

City councilor blasts state rep. on mileage expenses

Peter Franklin received \$21,000, over two years for 422 trips to Concord

By **BEN BULKELEY**
Staff Writer

On Wednesday, at the last Sullivan County delegation meeting before the November elections, Claremont City Council member Jeff Goff addressed the board concerning delegation chair Peter Franklin's, D-Newport, mileage reimbursement.

"Rep. Franklin has received a total of \$21,063 in the last two years, third highest in the state," said Goff, in a prepared statement. "Rep. Franklin has 422 total trips to Concord, second highest in the entire legislature, more than that of the speaker of the House, the majority leader of the House, and the chair of the House Finance Committee."

According to documents from the New Hampshire Legislative Accounting Office, Franklin was third in mileage reimbursement behind William Hatch, who was reimbursed for \$23,370 from 2007 to 2008, and Robert Theberge, who received \$21,785 in mileage reimburse-

ment.

Both Hatch and Theberge are from Coos County, in the far north.

"Rep. Franklin is not a member of the party leadership in Concord," said Goff. "He is not a chairperson of a major committee and is not recognized as a distinguished member of the legislature."

"This begs the question 'What in the world does he do in Concord for 422 days?'"

The New Hampshire House of Representatives met a total of 70 times in 2007, and 57 times so far in 2008.

"If you subtract weekends, holidays, and two days per month, Rep. Franklin has gone to Concord almost every day of the year," said Goff.

Rep. Jay Phinizy, D-Acworth, was second for Sullivan County in mileage reimbursement with \$12,581 for 213 trips.

"My opposition to this body as a whole has been well documented," said Goff. "But now, my opposition has now turned to outright bewilderment and disgust over a single issue."

Goff said that the average

See **MILEAGE**- Page A10

Page 1 of 2

MILEAGE FROM PAGE A1

amount in reimbursements paid to Sullivan County representatives, not including Franklin, was \$6,302, for an average of 86 trips in 2007, and 81 trips in 2008.

"I find this nothing more than an obscene abuse of the system. Rep. Franklin voted for an increase in the mileage reimbursement earlier this year, now I completely understand why," said Goff. "He saw dollar signs on his odometer."

Currently, there are two

rates for mileage reimbursement, including 50 and a half cent per mile federal rate, and a 28 and a half cent per mile state reimbursement rate.

It was unknown which rate Franklin used.

"As a gesture to indicate that he indeed did not abuse the system for his financial gain, today I would like Rep. Franklin to reimburse the state of New Hampshire \$8,482, which is the amount his total exceeds that of the

second highest in Sullivan County (Jay Phinizy, \$12,581)," said Goff. "After all, isn't this something Rep. Franklin would suggest if the roles were reversed?"

Goff asked Franklin if he had an explanation for all of the trips to Concord.

"If you're expecting information, I will not speak without any preparation," said Franklin. "I will let you know when I have prepared a statement."

Goff said that Franklin accounted for 22 percent of the total amount of money paid to the 13 members of the delegation in mileage reimbursement.

"As a matter of fact, counting this as a part time job, this practice has paid him over \$25 an hour," said Goff. "Not bad pay for volunteer work."

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Page 2 of 2